



**You're only
brave in the
moonlight**

piginawig

You're only brave in the moonlight by piginawig

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A homophobic church sign makes Eddie cry, and Richie decides to do something about it.

You're only brave in the moonlight

Author's Note:

Inspired by this tumblr post: <http://demisexuals.tumblr.com/post/166786216956/whatperks-youwinagainmoffat-majorstvjunkie>

Follow my tumblr while you're there!

Title from "Ruin the Friendship" by Demi Lovato

This was supposed to be a drabble. Also apparently I suck at Richie characterization. Like, there's not a single 'your mom' joke in the entire thing. I'll work on it.

Living in a small, backwards town like Derry, Maine was not what Eddie Kaspbrak would consider easy. Living in a small, backwards town like Derry, Maine *as a gay teenager* was what Eddie Kaspbrak would consider The Fucking Worst.

Luckily, his friends were cool about his sexuality, and had been since he'd timidly come out at a slumber party in the ninth grade. (Bill and Stan had given him solemn pats on the shoulder, Mike had nodded with a small but supportive smile, Ben had excitedly asked if he had a crush on anybody, and Richie had done finger guns and said something odd but supportive in one of his Voices.) Eddie knew how rare that kind of support was. On one of his weekly visits with Ben and Mike to the library they'd seen the headline of a newspaper, stating that a boy three towns over had been murdered after he was forcefully outed by his classmates. The week before, the headline had been about the rising death toll from AIDS.

Derry was miraculously quiet on the subject for most of Eddie's life, but he had heard enough to know that to be out in Derry was not something he wanted to be. He'd seen the graffiti on The

Kissing Bridge and he did not want to hear those words out loud.

In his senior year, a freshman boy named Alex came out. It was all over the school in less than a day, and Alex was pulled out of public school by the end of the week. Eddie watched the event unfold in front of him and he felt sick, day after day. The only other gay kid he'd ever known had literally been bullied out of school in less than a week.

"It's just this stupid town," Stan assured him at their weekly sleepover. "Everyone here is bigoted as fuck."

A derivative snort sounded from Mike. "You got that right."

"Anything that's different, they hate it. We got just the rest of this year until we can get out of here."

Eddie nodded at Stan's words, but couldn't get rid of the pit in his stomach. Was it just Derry? Would any other town be any better? He thought back to the headline on that newspaper, *17 Year Old Homosexual Beaten to Death*. That hadn't happened in Derry.

A hand covered his where it rested on the floor and he looked up, startled, to see Richie smiling at him with a blush. Eddie's breath hitched and he did what he always did in situations like this: ignored the direction his brain was taking him. He wouldn't think about his best friend that way, he *wouldn't*.

"Listen, Eds," Richie said. "We'll go to LA or New York and nobody'll even bat an eye at ya."

Eddie swallowed the lump in his throat, glanced down at Richie's hand on his own, and said quietly, "Don't call me Eds."

Alex wasn't allowed at the local church anymore. Eddie found out from his mother, who had stopped forcing him to go with her to church around the same time he stopped taking his bullshit

pills. He hadn't said a word as she ranted about "*that little gay boy*" infecting her "*sacred place of worship*" for all these years, and how glad she was that the pastor had put out that new sign.

Eddie didn't ask what the sign was, but he looked for it on his way to school the next day in the passenger seat of Richie's beat up old car.

When he saw it, his eyes filled with tears. He wasn't even sure why. He'd been expecting it, and it's not like he didn't know where the church stood on the matter.

"What the fuck," Richie muttered in angry disbelief. "What the *fuck!*"

Eddie's eyes widened when Richie pulled over, parking in the lot of the supermarket across the street. Once the car was in park, Richie stared at the sign.

"God does not accept homosexuality so we don't either!"

"How the fuck – Who even – This is fucking –" Richie seemed unable to spit out a complete sentence. Eddie sniffed quietly, trying not to alert Richie to his tears. It didn't work, and Richie's head whipped around to look at his best friend. "Hey – no, Eds, don't cry, it's okay–"

Eddie's tears started falling faster. Richie leaned awkwardly over the middle console and wrapped his lanky arms around Eddie's shoulders, patting his back. After a couple moments, Eddie sniffed a final time and sat back. His backpack was on the floorboard, and he opened the front pocket, which carried everything his fanny pack used to, and pulled out a tissue. He wiped his eyes and nose and tossed the dirty tissue in the makeshift garbage bag in Richie's backseat.

"You okay?" Richie asked.

Eddie shrugged. "It's stupid."

"No it's not," Richie said angrily. "They're the stupid ones."

Eddie laughed a little. “Just wish I was normal.”

“Hey, no –“ Richie planted his hands on Eddie’s cheeks, turning his face so they were eye to eye. “Look at me, okay?”

Eddie nodded, Richie’s hands moving up and down with his head.

Richie was quiet for a moment, as though he was trying to think of something deep to say that would make everything okay. Eventually, he settled on, “Fuck normal.”

Eddie giggled, and Richie smiled in response.

“Normal’s boring,” he continued. “I wouldn’t want to be normal. Being normal would fucking suck. It would suck dick.”

“Technically,” Eddie said quietly, “Normal *wouldn’t* suck dick.”

Richie’s eyes widened, and then he howled with laughter. “Holy shit! Eddie Spaghetti Gets Off a Good One!”

Eddie grinned and rolled his eyes, turning in his seat away from Richie.

“C’mon, Rich, we need to go or we’re gonna be late to school.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Richie responded, but put the car in gear anyway.

After his last class, Eddie met Richie at the bike racks like they did every day.

“Hey, Spaghetti Man,” Richie greeted, and Eddie rolled his eyes and told him not to call him that. Richie ignored him. “What are you doing tonight? Say around nine?”

Eddie narrowed his eyes. "Homework, I guess?"

"No you're not," Richie told him, as they started walking toward his car. "We have plans."

"I hope they're not illegal plans."

"Course not, Eds! What kinda person do you think I am?"

"The kind that makes illegal plans," Eddie said drily.

Richie waved him off. "Never. Anyway. We're gonna meet up with Haystack and he's gonna help us, 'cause we can't pull off my master plan alone."

"Are you going to tell me what we're doing?" Eddie asked, but he knew the answer before Richie opened his mouth.

"My dear Eddie," he said, "Where's the fun in that?"

"If your plan isn't illegal, why are we wearing black? And why wait until it's dark outside?"

Richie shrugged. "You ask too many questions."

Eddie sputtered, but Richie just laughed. "Ben's not wearing black, if that makes you feel better?"

"Then why are we wearing black?"

"It's fun to fuck with you?"

Eddie gasped and smacked Richie's arm. "What the fuck, Tozier?"

Richie grinned. "We're almost there, stop slapping me."

Eddie looked out the windshield and frowned. He saw Ben's truck in the church parking lot. His frown deepened when Richie turned in and parked next to him.

“Richie,” he said darkly. “What are we doing here?”

Richie bit his lip, avoiding eye contact with Eddie. “Bear with me, Eds –“

“Don’t call me that–“

“I have this image in my head, right? You’re in New York or something, some total hot shot – “ Eddie snorted. “ – and you’ve got this cool apartment. And in this cool apartment, you’ve got this shelf, and the shelf’s got pictures on it. And when all your cool hot shot friends come over for dinner parties and shit, you show ‘em the shelf, and you’re like *‘these are my best friends, look here’s Bill, he has a stutter, this is Stan, he likes birds better than people’* –“

“Is the point of this story just to make fun of our friends?”

Richie sighed. “And right in the middle, is a picture of you and me and this sign. This stupid fuckin’ sign that made you cry. Except in the picture you’re not crying, you’re giving the sign a big ‘fuck you’. And you can tell all your fuckin’ hot shot friends about your cool as fuck best friend, that’s me –“

“So what, you’re gonna take a picture of me flipping off the sign?”

Richie shrugged.

“Then what’s Ben here for?”

“He’s taking the picture.”

“Why aren’t you taking the picture?”

Richie averted his eyes again. “‘Cause I gotta give the sign a big ‘fuck you’, too.”

Eddie froze. Richie was staring at his lap, glasses slipping down his nose.

“Um,” Eddie said eloquently. Richie looked up at his best friend and shrugged.

“Sorry I didn’t tell you sooner,” he said.

“Why didn’t you?”

“Didn’t figure it out til a couple months ago, and then I just.. didn’t know how to tell you. I don’t know. Sorry.”

Eddie let out a breath of relief and leaned forward, wrapping Richie in a tight hug.

“Whoa there, Eds, you’re smooshing my glasses –“

Eddie pulled back, flushed and a little embarrassed. Richie was fixing his now crooked glasses but he was grinning widely.

“Alright, we’ve left Haystack waiting long enough, you ready to go take this picture?”

Eddie nodded, and climbed out of the car.

“Hey guys,” Ben greeted, his Polaroid camera in hand. “Ready?”

“Let’s do this shit!” Richie yelled, jogging over to the sign. Eddie followed him, biting his lip. He suddenly felt awkward, unsure of what to do with himself. He couldn’t get Richie’s confession out of his head. All the thoughts he’d spent years ignoring were pushing themselves to the forefront of his mind. Richie looked stupid as fuck in a long sleeve black shirt and black running shorts, his giant glasses with tape in the middle taking up half his face. But fuck if Eddie didn’t love him. He watched as Richie combed his hair with his fingers before shaking it out, asking Ben if it looked okay. Eddie grinned because it looked exactly the same as it had before he’d messed with it. Richie made eye contact with Eddie and made a stupid face, sticking his tongue out, and Eddie giggled. He was cute even when he was a fucking idiot, which was always, and suddenly it was hitting him all at once. The feelings weren’t new, but the recognition of them was.

Eddie took a few steps closer to Richie while Ben readied the camera. He kept his voice low and said, “So you’re really gay?”

Richie's cheeks reddened and he looked down at the ground. "I mean – maybe bisexual? I don't know. I just know I like yo-" he stopped, eyes wide, and cleared his throat. "Boys. I like boys."

Richie's cheeks were even more red, and Eddie couldn't hear anything beyond the pounding of his heart. Richie could stare at the ground all he wanted, but Eddie heard what he was going to say. *I just know I like you.*

Eddie vaguely heard Ben's voice start to say something, and Richie looked up toward him, and in the darkness Eddie could see how red his cheeks still were. He wondered if they were as warm as they looked.

Richie opened his mouth, presumably to answer whatever Ben had said. Eddie grabbed his face, turning Richie toward him. He offhandedly thought that yes, Richie's cheeks *were* just as warm as they looked, and Richie's wide eyes made him look like an owl behind his glasses, and he couldn't see his freckles in the dark but he knew they were there, knew them like the back of his own hand, and-

And he kissed him.

He felt Richie's gasp against his mouth and heard Ben gasp from where he stood a few feet away. Within moments, Richie's hands were at the back of his neck, fingers sliding up into his hair, and Eddie grinned against chapped lips.

"I got it!" Ben yelled happily, and Eddie didn't know what he was talking about but if finding out meant pulling away from Richie then he didn't want to know.

They kissed for a few more moments before Richie started laughing, quietly, in disbelief, against Eddie's lips. They pulled back, foreheads still pressed together.

"What the fuck, Spaghetti Man?" Richie asked, breathless.

"That's called a kiss, dumbass," Eddie responded, breathless himself. Richie was still giggling.

"Yeah, it fuckin' is," Richie agreed, leaning in again to

press their lips together.

“Um,” Ben’s voice broke them apart. They both turned to look at him, matching blushes on their faces. “I got a good picture.”

Eddie’s eyebrows rose. “You took a picture?”

“That’ll look real fuckin’ good on your shelf, Eds,” Richie said, before running to Ben’s side.

“Don’t call me that,” Eddie responded, following. Ben was holding the polaroid in his hand, and Eddie could make out their figures in the dark picture, next to the church’s sign.

“That’s a ‘fuck you’ if I’ve ever seen one,” Ben commented, before throwing an arm over each of their shoulders.

Eddie laughed, catching Richie’s eye.

“Well, Haystack,” Richie said loudly, pulling away. “Thanks for your assistance, buddy, but uh,”

Ben nodded, laughing. “Yeah, yeah, I got it. Get lost.”

Richie winked at him. “Certainly can’t make out with Eds if you’re still here.”

“*Richie!*” Eddie exclaimed, stepping toward him and then shoving him. The two started making their way back to Richie’s car.

“What?” Richie said, smirking. “I’m gonna drive you home and we’re totally gonna make out, Eds, don’t even pretend like it’s not gonna happen.”

Eddie crossed his arms, trying to look annoyed, but he could feel his lips twitching at the corners. He opened the passenger door of the car.

“Fine,” he conceded. “We’ll make out. But don’t call me Eds.”